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A Process Framework for the Education-Focused Capstone: Supporting Expansion and Sustainable Outcomes

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Abstract

This article aims to share a process framework created to guide entry-level occupational therapy doctoral programs in operationalizing and expanding the scope of the education-focused capstone described by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®).The impetus for this work was the completion of a professional development, education-focused capstone that proved to be novel, sustainable, and transformative for the capstone team, including the student, faculty mentor, site mentor, and doctoral capstone coordinator. This capstone ultimately created a professional development course covering the social determinants of health for occupational therapy practitioners, now offered through the American Occupational Therapy Association. Due to the lack of published guidance for this type of capstone project, the road from ideation to creation had a larger learning curve than the team anticipated. Following the completion of the capstone, the team performed a 3-month retrospective analysis through reflection, discussion, literature review, and journaling during weekly meetings to uncover facilitators, barriers, key takeaways, and themes. The team posited that the methods were grounded and reproducible and created the *Education-Focused Capstone Framework* to assist other capstone teams interested in similar expansion of the education-focused capstone. This framework was built on an understanding of Standards, current literature, and theories of transformative learning and heutagogy.

Keywords

Occupational therapy, capstone, education, professional development, process framework

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to share a process framework created to guide entry-level occupational therapy doctoral programs in operationalizing and expanding the scope of the education-focused capstone described by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®). The impetus for this work was the completion of a professional development, education-focused capstone that proved to be novel, sustainable, and transformative for the capstone team, including the student, faculty mentor, site mentor, and doctoral capstone coordinator. This capstone ultimately created a professional development course covering the social determinants of health for occupational therapy practitioners, now offered through the American Occupational Therapy Association. Due to the lack of published guidance for this type of capstone project, the road from ideation to creation had a larger learning curve than the team anticipated. Following the completion of the capstone, the team performed a 3-month retrospective analysis through reflection, discussion, literature review, and journaling during weekly meetings to uncover facilitators, barriers, key takeaways, and themes. The team posited that the methods were grounded and reproducible and created the *Education-Focused Capstone Framework* to assist other capstone teams interested in similar expansion of the education-focused capstone. This framework was built on an understanding of Standards, current literature, and theories of transformative learning and heutagogy.

Introduction

This article describes the progression of an innovative education-focused doctoral capstone concentrated on the continuing professional development of occupational therapy (OT) practitioners. The authors, four capstone team members, including a student, faculty mentor, site mentor, and doctoral capstone coordinator (DCC), share an example of an education-focused capstone from initiation to fruition, including supports, barriers, lessons learned, and outcomes. In this example, the student from an entry-level doctoral OT program actively participated in all phases of the capstone process. The faculty mentor from the student's OT program guided the capstone following the program's requirements, and the DCC ensured adherence to Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®; 2018) Standards. The site mentor, the Director of Professional Development at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), shared expertise directly related to the student's project. Ultimately, this team recognized the exemplary outcomes of this capstone but also realized that their program's past experiences did not prepare them for this novel, education-focused endeavor. The authors, therefore, propose a framework to 1) guide OT programs and capstone teams with intentional and efficient processes and 2) expand the interpretation of an education-focused capstone.

The ACOTE® (2018) Standards recognize eight capstone focus areas, including clinical practice skills, research skills, administration, leadership, program and policy development, advocacy, theory development, and education, but provide little guidance on the process or operationalization of each area. Programs must interpret how to conduct capstones within their contexts. Although this flexibility allows Doctor of Occupational Therapy programs to develop capstones that align with their curricular design and facilitate innovation, flexibility can also invite unwelcome ambiguity. While teams can find general frameworks to navigate the capstone experience within the literature, there is limited guidance on the nuanced processes required for specific focus areas, such as education.

Some studies that provide guidance include Delbert et al. (2020), who offer a general capstone framework, called Systems and Experiential Learning Framework (S.E.L.F.), to connect the capstone to students' didactic coursework. A commonly referenced capstone resource by DeLuliis and Bednarski (2019) includes a brief description and examples of the education focus area. DeLuliis and Bednarski (2019) describe the education-focused capstone as one that pertains to an OT's capacity as an educator. This could include a variety of learners in diverse settings and is grounded in teaching and learning theories, curriculum, and pedagogy. Smallfield and Wood (2019) conducted a qualitative study to understand the experiences of five students who completed the capstone in academic settings. The themes derived were used to support the value of this type of capstone and develop a framework for activities and roles that students can perform within academic settings. While these frameworks touch on education-focused capstones, they lack specific processes for a capstone related to continuing professional development.

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Possibly due to this lack of guidance, students select the education focus area less frequently than other capstone areas (Kemp et al., 2020; Kiraly-Alvarez et al., 2022). In their national survey, including 13 OT programs, Kemp et al. (2020) found that students most often completed capstones in advanced clinical skills and policy/program development. Education was noted as the fourth most common of the eight areas listed in the ACOTE® (2018) Standards. Kiraly-Alvarez et al. (2022) reported a similar ranking of the education focus as fifth among the eight choices. Based on their findings, Kemp et al. (2020) concluded that it may be necessary to define and clarify the ACOTE® (2018) focus areas to support programs and capstone teams. Familiarity with advanced clinical skills and program development capstones and the lack of clear guidelines for other focus areas may prompt students and faculty to shy away from an education-focused experience.

As will be described in this paper, the value of an education-focused professional development capstone lies in the ability of the end product to impact the growth of practicing clinicians and, ultimately, the profession's sustainability. Students who engage in this type of capstone can be expected to understand teaching and learning theories, instructional design principles, and learning platforms. Although Smallfield and Wood (2019) emphasized the need to prepare students to be future educators, this preparation does not have to be limited to classroom learning. With an ever-changing healthcare landscape, there is a need to ensure the availability of evidence-informed and contemporary education for the profession to grow and respond to societal changes.

Description

The example of an education-focused capstone shared in this paper was coordinated through an entry-level doctoral OT program in Philadelphia with the AOTA. While it was clear from the beginning that this type of capstone would meet the ACOTE® (2018) standards, an education-focused capstone had not been implemented within this program. Most capstones had focused on research or program development. Faculty on this capstone team consulted resources such as Deluliis and Bednarski's (2019) textbook and found examples of education-focused capstones, primarily implemented in academic settings. The textbook and this program's capstone handbook recognized education as a focus area, but neither offered a specific framework to follow.

The team mostly applied the program's standard capstone procedures. Following establishing a partnership with the site, the student, faculty mentor, and site mentor met to discuss the potential topic for the capstone. The student suggested the topic of social determinants of health. Both the faculty mentor and site mentor continued weekly meetings with the student for the semester prior to the capstone experience to clarify the focus of the capstone and set expectations for communication. They determined that the capstone would focus on creating an evidence-informed continuing professional development course for OT practitioners on the social determinants of health.

This period of collaboration before the capstone experience appears to be the point at which strong relationships between the student and each mentor were established. This pre-capstone experience assisted in developing trust and mutually respectful relationships where the student could engage in self-directed learning while also participating in formal weekly meetings with the mentors. Self-directed learning focuses on the student's readiness or willingness to learn and ability to take ownership of their educational outcomes (Bhandari et al., 2020). Ultimately, the student's sense of ownership of the project and rapid acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, including adult learning theory, instructional design theory, and eLearning software, allowed for the completion and implementation of the professional development course within the 14-week capstone experience timeframe. At the time of dissemination, the capstone was well-received among university faculty and students and stood out as a project outcome that would be welcomed in the future.

In the absence of guidelines for the professional development education- focus area, the capstone team adapted, expanded, and added to some of the university program's routine capstone procedures. See Figure 1 for standout aspects of the team's process; some procedures are standard, and others are outside of the program's typical procedures.

Analysis

Following this experience, the team recognized that this capstone was unique and wanted to help others create similar experiences. This capstone team assessed their lived experience through a retrospective analysis using discussion, literature review, and journaling during weekly meetings for three months following the completion of this capstone. First, each team member wrote a general outline regarding their perspective, including the following components:

- Description of their role on the capstone team
- Description of their perspective regarding team members
- Capstone procedures
- Facilitators and barriers
- Capstone outcomes
- Key takeaways through the lens of their team role

Then, the team met weekly over three months to discuss their perspectives, appraise literature to better understand the experience, and explore commonalities and differences between their experiences. Team members wrote deeper narratives in a serial fashion until arriving at a complete perspective with key takeaways. Discussion about theoretical concepts like heutagogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning supported the team's efforts to share their process with others in the OT community. Finally, each team member organized a graphic depiction of how they perceived the integral aspects of the education-focused capstone process. From the individual visuals, the team collaborated to build the final process framework visual.

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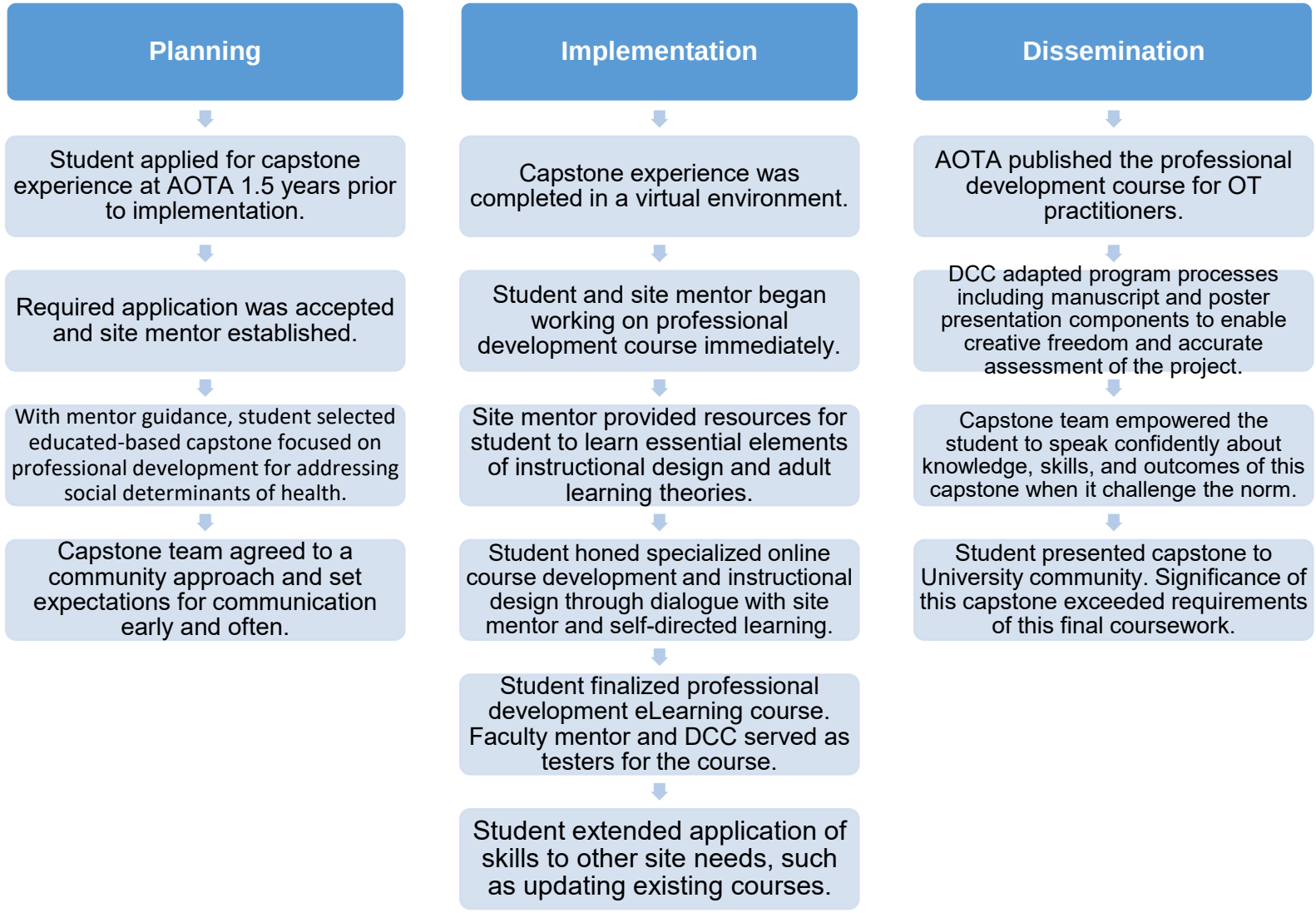
Figure 1

Standout Procedures of this Education-focused Capstone



Ethical Considerations

The methods presented in this article were reflective and did not involve human subjects; therefore, institutional review board (IRB) approval was not required. No consent was necessary since reflections came directly from those involved in this process. The team considered ethics throughout the reflective process. The authors determined no conflicts of interest or other ethical concerns.

Results

Capstone Student Perspective

Observations of the Capstone Team

While all team members brought an individual viewpoint and varying degrees of expertise, all three encouraged the student to lead this capstone. Team members were open and honest regarding their knowledge and limitations specific to this project and encouraged the student to foster independent learning. The team members used open communication, trust, and flexibility to break down the typical educational hierarchy and, instead, promote the student's sense of ownership regarding the capstone. The student formed a mentorship with each capstone team member and confidently discussed their plans for the capstone. The trust and mutual respect shared through each mentorship helped the student complete this capstone and prepare for future collaborations outside academia.

Perceived Facilitators and Barriers

Throughout this capstone, the student found the following interactions to be facilitators of success: development of a partnership with both the faculty and site mentor, openness and flexibility of the DCC, and readiness for self-directed learning. Early collaboration fostered trust, which allowed the student a sense of ownership, increasing their drive and passion. The DCC's openness supported this sense of ownership through adaptations to the course and capstone procedures, such as dissemination. It is important to acknowledge that the student's readiness to direct their learning played a significant role in developing trust and flexibility between the student and the team members. The student took initiative and developed advanced skills for capstone success and their professional development. As the student gained the skills needed to complete this education-focused capstone, they realized that they had developed an interest in continuing to educate members of the OT profession.

The student acknowledged two barriers that occurred during this capstone, the dissemination process and concerns about the validity of this project. This OT program's approach to capstone dissemination applied mostly to capstones that end with measurable outcomes. Since the program's typical dissemination process focused heavily on data-driven outcomes, the student initially struggled to showcase the unique outcomes of the education-focused capstone. The DCC eased this barrier by allowing flexibility in the final poster layout. However, the student still grappled with applying the guidelines to their experience. At times the student felt like they were doing things to meet a set of requirements that did not recognize the value of this capstone. The second barrier was concerned with the validity of the capstone, which was questioned

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by some faculty members who were not directly involved. Due to unfamiliarity with an education-focused capstone, some faculty members expressed concerns about achieving hours and receiving an in-depth experience at the site. This prompted the student to complete additional onsite activities during their experience, despite reassurance from the site mentor that the time required to create the course was adequate to fill the requirement for capstone hours. While these concerns initially caused stress and self-doubt, the student later recognized that addressing faculty concerns helped them to clearly and confidently explain their education-focused capstone by the end of this experience.

Key Takeaways for the Capstone Student

Pursuing an education-focused capstone may not be suitable for every student. Students who wish to complete an education-focused capstone should consider these key takeaways:

1. Direct the learning experience and confidently communicate needs.
2. Confidently advocate for the capstone and collaborate with the capstone team to ensure dissemination best showcases the outcomes of the capstone.
3. Prepare to translate knowledge of teaching and learning to align with OT theory and practice.

Faculty Mentor Perspective

Observations of the Student

From experience teaching this student in didactic classes, the faculty mentor perceived this student as a quiet, hard worker with creative ideas that deepened classroom conversations. The student contacted the faculty mentor to discuss capstone ideas earlier than most students in their cohort. The faculty mentor sensed a commitment from the student for a unique capstone experience that could influence current practitioners. The faculty mentor and student shared a passion for similar topics, most notably supporting inclusive OT practice to improve client outcomes. Throughout their capstone experience, this student amplified strengths of self-determination, timely and clear communication, creativity, organization, and persistence. They met challenges in the capstone process with an eye toward growth for themselves and OT practitioners. This capstone student skillfully balanced detailed work with understanding their project's significance in the profession's context.

Perceived Facilitators and Barriers

The faculty mentor perceived the student’s self-determination as the primary driver for this capstone. The student elicited specific help as needed and maintained communication between all capstone team members. Communicating remotely throughout the capstone supported the student’s autonomy and fostered equal partnerships. The student's early preparation was essential in forming a partnership with the site. One key resource for the faculty mentor was the DCC, who maintained an openness to this type of capstone and knowledge of ACOTE® (2018) Standards.

Barriers to this capstone experience included the lack of an organized framework to guide an education-focused capstone. There was scant information available within professional literature regarding how to conduct this type of capstone in OT education, and there was no distinct, specific procedure within this program. Trying to assimilate this project into the program's typical processes often led to inefficiencies and extra work for the student. It was challenging to help the student balance the required elements while completing program procedures typically applied to research and program development capstones. For example, the student was initially required to develop a scholarly question and method. The student determined that reviewing the literature, continuing education courses, and course syllabi from programs across the United States would help advance understanding and readiness to create a course. This approach benefitted the student's knowledge; however, it sometimes seemed like two projects - a scholarly inquiry to determine the components of the continuing education course and the actual creation of the course. Another barrier was the department's limited experience with this type of project. While communication between the student, mentors, and DCC was consistent and clear, it was challenging to adequately communicate the nature and aspects of this capstone to other members of the academic program's community.

Key Takeaways for the Faculty Mentor

1. Connect with students early to identify shared interests and students' readiness for self-determined learning.
2. Agree to a community approach between members of the capstone team to ensure the power of the experience, not the power of one person over another.
3. Advocate for the student and the capstone by educating others about the nature and goals of an education-focused capstone; encourage the student to do the same.

Doctoral Capstone Coordinator Perspective

Observations of the Student

This student was easy to work with; they presented as motivated and enthusiastic from the start. During stressful times they showed resilience, professionalism, and self-advocacy. The student's self-direction and drive were observed as an asset to this type of capstone throughout the process. This student was confident when reaching out for help and clearly articulated their capstone needs. One thing that stood out was the student's ability to give constructive feedback to the DCC during their capstone, which helped smooth the process and make positive changes for the future. They could advocate for themselves and what they believed would be best for their capstone, even if it meant challenging the current systems.

Perceived Facilitators and Barriers

There are many reasons that this capstone was successful from the point of view of the DCC's role, which evolved throughout this experience. One of the main facilitators observed was the match between the student, faculty mentor, and site mentor. All capstone team members felt confident in their communication and role. Another

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element that enabled this capstone was the virtual nature, which appeared to allow for accessible communication and independence for the student. The DCC, faculty mentor, and student also showed flexibility and willingness to try something new, allowing for innovation and self-directed learning.

One significant barrier was the current system in place for the capstone process. It was geared toward program development capstones, which became very apparent during the development of this capstone. Challenging the current system also led observers outside of the immediate capstone team to question the validity of this capstone as one that was able to meet the ACOTE® (2018) Standards. A second barrier was the lack of resources to develop this type of capstone. This hurdle constantly challenged team members to pave their own way. Working through these barriers was essential to the program's growth and development regarding the capstone process.

There are many things to consider when assigning capstone teams. Variety and creativity allow a better match for student and faculty mentor strengths and weaknesses. Creativity in capstone focus area choice and site selection can benefit all involved. It is necessary to ensure that the student has other supports to make this process successful, such as class meetings and contact with other capstone students to feel supported during a capstone that can feel very isolating. The DCC should consistently support the capstone team during the entire process. Being supportive and flexible allows the team to give essential and honest feedback that will continue to improve the capstone process within the University. When students feel limited or unsupported, the potential outcomes of the experience will also be limited.

Key Takeaways for the DCC

1. Be flexible to allow innovation and creativity; try new capstone focus areas or environments.
2. Consistently support all capstone team members and encourage open communication.
3. Seek feedback frequently from the capstone team and incorporate that feedback for improved capstone processes.

Site Mentor Perspective

Observations of the Student

The working relationship between the mentor and mentee officially began during the capstone planning semester**.** As part of the early process, the student met via phone call and interviewed with the prospective site. The student and the potential mentor were able to get an initial sense of each other's personality and learning style through this call which assisted in determining the final selection of this site by the mentee and agreement of the mentor. The mentee presented as a strong and independent learner who brought interest and passion for her capstone topic and understood the importance of ensuring that the information contained within a course was accurate, pertinent, timely, and developed according to adult eLearning theory for learner knowledge acquisition and retention.

Perceived Facilitators and Barriers

Several features supported the success of this capstone, including early relationship building, clear expectations, and flexibility. Beginning student/mentor collaboration early fostered a strong working relationship grounded in trust, shared values, goals, and commitment to the capstone. The creation of the capstone became the focus during implementation, which was not deterred by the need for relationship building or ambiguity regarding the topic and goals. A schedule of meetings and outcomes prevented miscommunication during the capstone process. It should be noted that modifications were made to the plan and schedule as needed throughout the experience as agreed upon by the mentor and student; flexibility was necessary.

The mentor noted very few barriers to this experience. One that did arise but only minimally affected the experience was a bit of confusion regarding the number of hours that the student would spend in discussion with the mentor versus the amount of time spent working on the capstone independently. The remote nature of the experience created a need to identify which activities would be considered 'onsite' and which would be considered 'independent learning' to match ACOTE® (2018) Standards.

Key Takeaways for the Site Mentor

1. Develop strong mentorship skills and engage early in the capstone planning process.
2. Ensure knowledge of teaching and learning, the specific capstone topic, and means of project dissemination.
3. Show enthusiasm for the student's interests, learning, and project.

Discussion

At the end of the experience, we determined that this novel education-focused capstone was an outstanding example of student and program success. Therefore, we performed the retrospective review to pinpoint how and why this innovative capstone worked. We considered capstone outcomes at student, program, site, and profession levels. We derived key themes by sharing our stories from the perspective of our roles in the capstone team. We analyzed the progression of this capstone from each team member's point of view and identified supports and barriers evident throughout the capstone. We understood our analysis in the context of recent literature related to OT capstones. As a result, we propose a process framework (see Figure 2) for programs and capstone teams interested in designing and implementing education-focused capstones. Our framework offers a guide and reflects an expanded interpretation of the education focus area to include continuing professional development.

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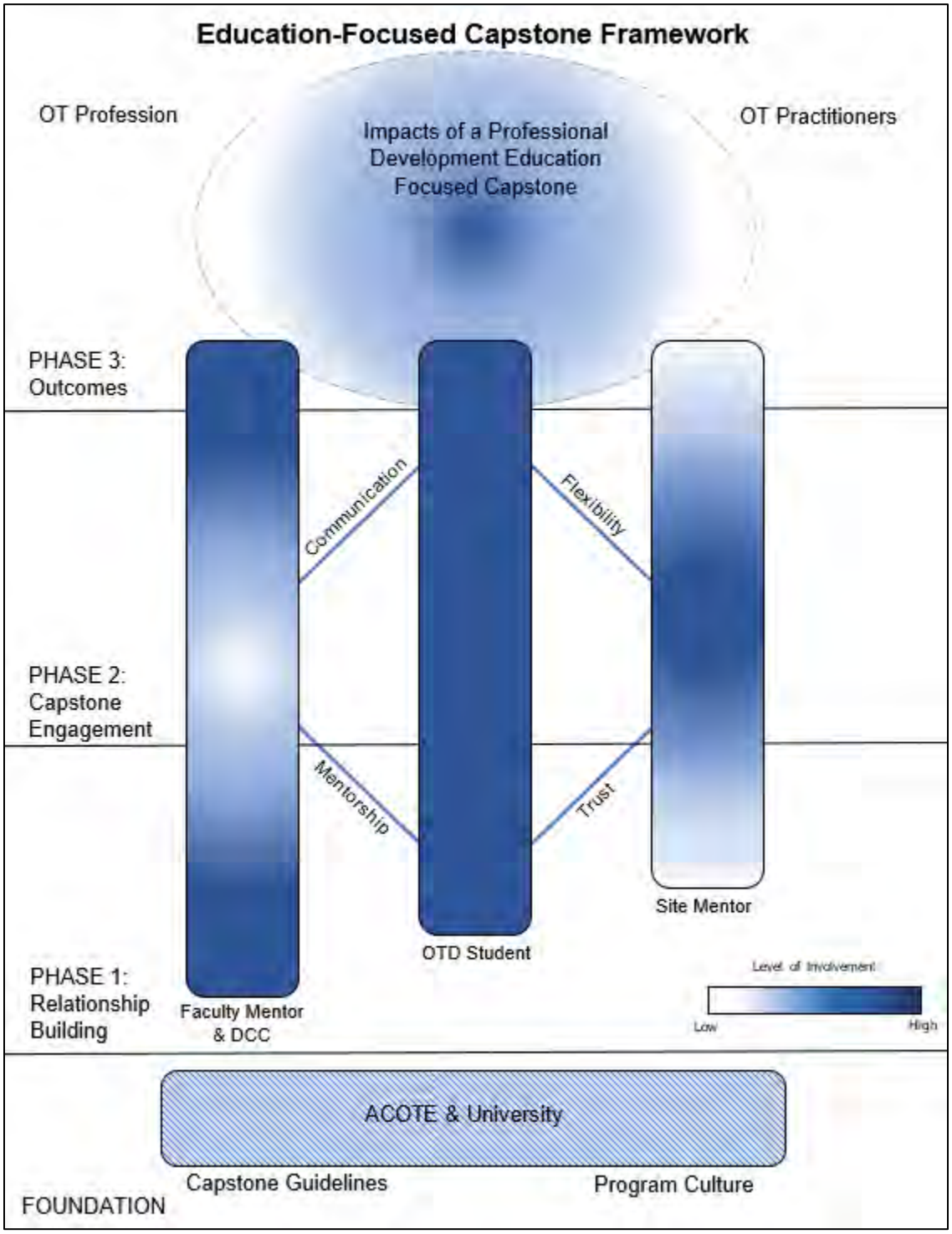
Figure 2

Education-Focused Capstone Framework



We recognize connections between our retrospective analysis findings and theoretical perspectives, including transformative learning, self-directed learning, and heutagogy, or self-determined learning (Hase & Kenyon, 2013), all of which relate to adult learners. We have considered these theories when designing this process framework. Mezirow (2003) described transformative learning theory as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (p. 58). Through the process of this education-focused capstone, the student developed advanced skills by connecting past experiences with the experience of creating continuing professional development for OT practitioners. This connection produced deep understanding, accompanied by an awareness of learning and new perspectives. Evidence supports the application of transformative learning in health profession education (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2019) and the doctoral capstone process in the OT profession (Mattila et al., 2020). Feldhacker and Greiner (2022) suggested using self-directed learning to empower students' self-concept, motivation, and readiness to learn to facilitate increased engagement in course content. Heutagogy extends adult learning theory, with the learner deciding the content and how they learn and the teacher being a mentor who guides the learner through discourse (Hase & Kenyon, 2013; Levy-Feldman, 2018). This capstone student made choices about their learning, facilitated by dialogue with their mentors, throughout all phases of the capstone. The DCC, site mentor, and faculty mentor assured a fit between what and how the student wanted to learn and nurtured the student's capability and self-efficacy (Abraham & Komattil, 2017) through mentorship.

Foundation

This framework acknowledges that the foundation of a capstone is formed by ACOTE® (2018) Standards and capstone guidelines, along with the academic institution and the culture of the OT program. Capstone guidelines include the interpretive guidelines for the accreditation standards, industry resources such as textbooks, and program-specific handbooks and procedures. Concerning the program culture, teams must be particularly aware of diverse perspectives throughout the capstone process, especially when a focus area is novel within a program. Also included in the program culture would be the connection between capstone and curriculum. As indicated in the ACOTE® (2018) Standards, the capstone must be an integral part of the curriculum while also reflecting its scope and design.

Phase 1: Relationship Building

The capstone team begins Phase 1, laying the groundwork for the capstone project and experience through early relationship building. Phase 1 centers on developing mentorships between the student and each mentor and the commitment of all team members to approach the capstone as a community. During this phase, the student plans the education-focused capstone project and experience. Phase 1 lasted one year for this capstone, beginning with a natural matching of student and faculty mentor and ending with a program- and site-approved capstone plan. This timeline will likely be unique to each academic program's structure. All capstone team members should participate in Phase 1. The student, faculty mentor, and DCC initially demonstrate the

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highest levels of involvement. The site mentor also engages during Phase 1 with ample time to foster a relationship with the student before the 14-week capstone experience. Early participation of the site mentor during capstone planning is highly recommended for this type of capstone due to their high level of involvement in the capstone project itself. This capstone team recognizes Phase 1 as intentional and essential to building trust and communication among team members. During this phase, it is also necessary to set individualized student objectives for the capstone, as required by the ACOTE® (2018) Standards. Team members must have clear expectations and set the student up as the driver for what will be accomplished during the capstone. We also advocate for programs to foster students' connection with their peers to reduce possible feelings of isolation for students who have chosen a less common capstone area of focus.

Phase 2: Capstone Engagement

With a strong foundation in place, the student begins implementing the planned project and engaging in the 14-week capstone experience, with guidance from the site mentor, during Phase 2. The work done during this phase will depend on the specific education-focused capstone, but we expect this is the hub of student development related to skills in teaching and learning. The student and site mentor have the highest levels of involvement during this experience phase. Phase 2 is primarily facilitated by the student's self-directed learning and the site mentor's expertise. This connection may be considered co-creation of education, consistent with listening, openness, mutual learning, and a sense of belonging and cohesion instead of the power structure often assumed in a teacher and student relationship (Konings et al., 2021). The DCC and faculty mentor remain available for consultation and stay in communication.

Phase 3: Outcomes

During Phase 3, students share the outcomes of the education-focused capstone, spotlighting their new in-depth knowledge, as indicated by the ACOTE® (2018) Standards. All capstone team members engage in Phase 3, with the highest level of involvement evident from the student, faculty mentor, and DCC. Consistent with program requirements at this institution, the student shared the outcomes of their capstone with students, faculty, and administrators of the OT program through a poster presentation. Methods for dissemination would be determined by the program and may require adaptation based on the nature of the education focus area. As in all phases, flexibility supports this type of capstone. When an education-focused capstone is novel within a program, as it was in this example, we suggest concentrated effort to adequately demonstrate the process and scope of the capstone and how it connects with the foundation (ACOTE® [2018] Standards and interpretive guides, academic institution, and culture of the OT program). This type of capstone allows for creativity in dissemination, including but not limited to written manuscripts, local or national presentations, capstone site presentations, and education sessions. Evaluation of the capstone is a necessary part of the process to adhere to the ACOTE® (2018) Standards and could include surveys of course participants, feedback from stakeholders at the capstone site, critique by faculty, and evaluation of student performance. A mindful approach to this phase can foster recognition of this type of capstone's value and multi-layered outcomes.

At the heart of this framework, we highlight four key supports for education-focused capstone teams: mentorship, trust, flexibility, and communication. Through analysis, we identified action items to promote these supports: 1) start relationship building early in the process, 2) adapt academic program processes to support the professional development-based, education-focused capstone, 3) foster a collegial approach among team members, 4) promote self-directed learning of the student, and 5) embrace the virtual environment as a viable alternative to an on-site experience.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

While we acknowledge that this framework was developed using a single case of an exemplary capstone, we invite programs to consider the process described and the potential outcomes, both tangible and conceptual. This team affirms that the education-focused capstone transcended typical capstone outcomes, including changes in student perspectives and attitudes (Krusen et al., 2020). Students have in-depth exposure to creating educational and professional development opportunities. Applying instructional design strategies to develop evidence-informed content can be a transformative learning experience that leads to new career goals related to OT education. Kiraly-Alvarez et al. (2022) examined outcomes related to capstone experiences and suggested how programs can prepare students to become educators. In this study, 10 of 61 respondents reported getting a job at their capstone site, and 57% reported getting a job in a similar setting or with a similar population. Following the capstone experience in this article, the student feels capable of creating educational opportunities to contribute to their profession. Their name is listed in the continuing professional development course, widely available for five years through the AOTA. In addition, they were accepted for a poster presentation related to the content of their capstone at the World Federation of Occupational Therapists Congress 2022.

Occupational therapy programs can expect to expand the repertoire of capstones and sites available to students when including this capstone focus area. In our experience, since this student's successful education-focused capstone, the department has revised procedures to include focus areas beyond research and program development. Students are making more broad choices for their capstones. The program received recognition because of its affiliation with the capstone site and the tangible outcomes of this capstone. The university and program showed commitment to preparing new OT educators, which may support an ample faculty workforce.

From the perspective of the site, students bring new knowledge and skills to assist with initiatives that engage the OT community. In this example, the site gained a quality course for practitioners regarding social determinants of health, content that has only recently been required within OT curricula (ACOTE®, 2018). Outcomes for OT practitioners include exposure to new information to enhance current practice and client outcomes. This framework also recognizes multifaceted benefits for the OT profession, including building its capacity through knowledge sharing. Education-focused capstones have the potential to affect the sustainability of the profession through teaching and lifelong learning.

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Limitations

Because this was a reflective process based on one remarkable capstone, there are limitations inherent in the design. We examined our experience through the lens of accreditation standards and literature about capstones to mitigate some of the limiting factors of this reflective process. Pulling the reflections from four different perspectives into a singular framework also helped reduce individual bias. Although these steps were taken, this is only one capstone example, so it cannot demonstrate effectiveness across different OT programs and capstones.

Future Research

The authors suggest research to explore further the utility of the *Education-Focused Capstone Framework* across OT programs. This work would investigate how the framework applies to different foundational elements, such as curriculum, program culture, and procedures. Additionally, collecting data on the outcomes of education-focused capstones would inform programs about the value and feasibility of this focus area. Specifically, data on the career progression of students who complete education-focused capstones may demonstrate how acquired special skills are carried forward to build the profession's capacity.

Reflection on the process used with other less-utilized capstone focus areas such as theory development, administration, and leadership may be a starting point for establishing guidance for programs that seek to offer students an array of capstone choices. Defining and expanding the current ACOTE® (2018) focus areas may foster increased program and student engagement and confidence in pursuing innovative capstones frequently perceived as challenging. Research that supports engagement across capstone focus areas encourages lasting quality outcomes.

Conclusion

This article outlines an education-focused capstone process involving a professional development course for OT practitioners. The capstone team analyzed their perspectives to identify supports, barriers, lessons learned, and outcomes of this exemplar capstone. The team incorporated their experience with ACOTE® (2018) Standards, current capstone literature, and educational theory to create a process framework to assist OT programs and capstone teams with intentional and efficient processes. The *Education-Focused Capstone Framework* expands the interpretation of the education focus area to include professional development. The education-focused capstone is recommended as a means of transformation, growth, and sustainability for OT students, programs, and the profession.

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